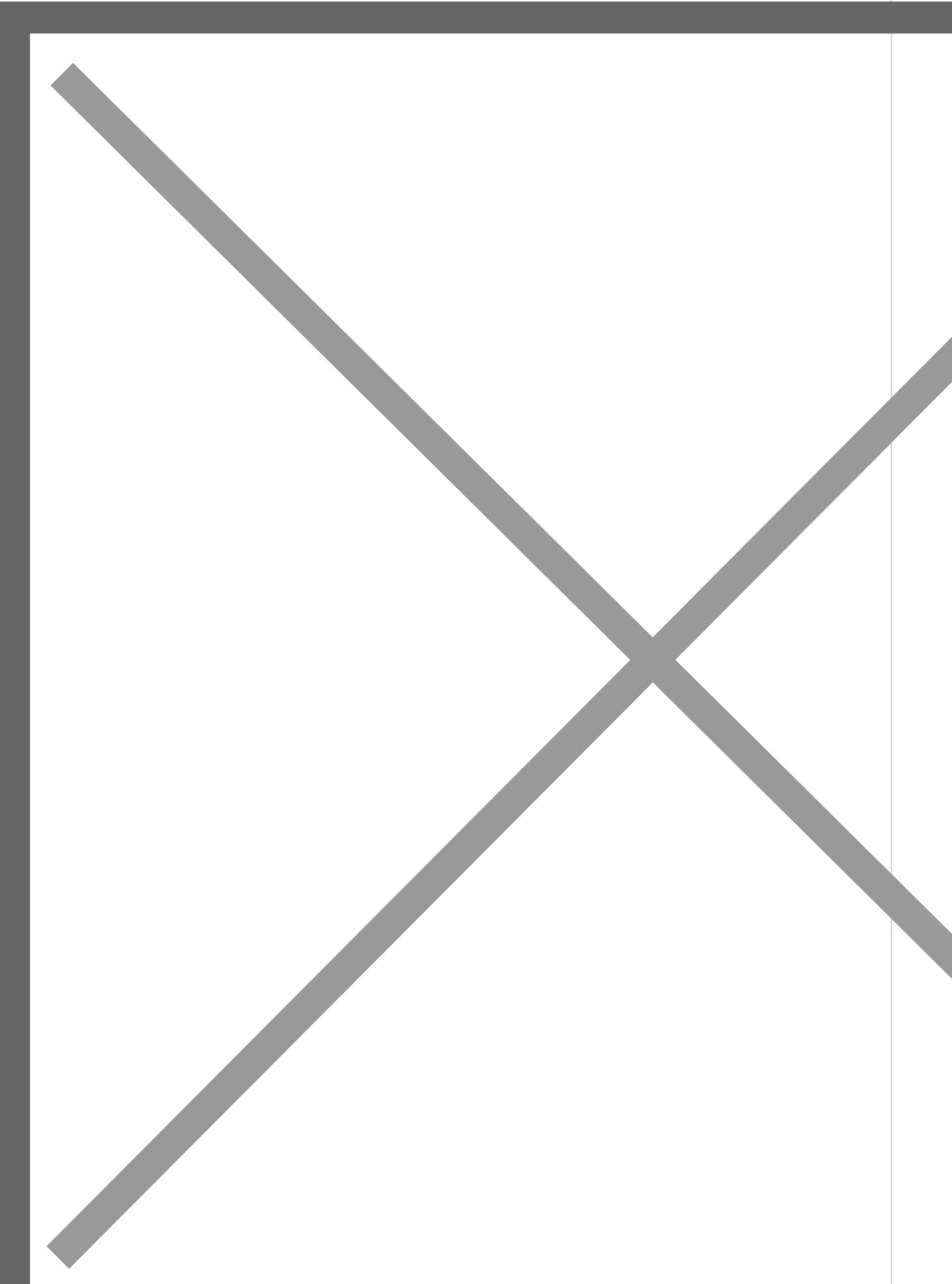


*World Health Organization says
Gaza's health situation is
catastrophic*

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Geneva, December 11 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization's 34-member executive board has adopted a resolution calling for immediate, unimpeded aid deliveries to Gaza. "Gaza's health system is on its knees and collapsing," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, with only 14 of 36 hospitals functioning at any capacity.

The emergency action, proposed by Afghanistan, Qatar, Yemen and Morocco, seeks passage into Gaza for medical personnel and supplies, requires the WHO to document violence against healthcare workers and patients, and to secure funding to rebuild hospitals.

"I must be frank with you: these tasks are almost impossible in the current circumstances," Tedros said, commending the countries for finding common ground and saying it was the first time any United Nations motion had been agreed to by consensus since the conflict began.

About 90 percent of Gaza's 2.3 million residents have been displaced within the territory. With very little aid allowed in, Palestinians are facing severe shortages of food, water and other basic goods.

Mustafa Barghouti, a Palestinian politician who heads the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees with 25 teams working in Gaza, said: "Half of Gaza is now starving." Barghouti said 350,000 people had infections including 115,000 with severe respiratory infections and lacking warm clothes, blankets and protection from the rain. He emphasized that many were suffering from stomach complaints because there was little clean water and not enough fuel to use to boil it, risking outbreaks of dysentery, typhoid and cholera.

"To add insult to injury, we have 46,000 injured people who cannot be treated properly because most of the hospitals are not functioning," he said.

Israel intensified its bombardment on Gaza after the latest United States veto on a UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire. The vote was triggered by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter – a measure unused in decades.

The article allows the Secretary-General to "bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security."

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